Chapter 23

Ryan was still sitting in the sitting room, quietly going through the pile of Nova documents that Claudia had earlier handed to him. His focus was intense, his eyes moving across every word, every number. He didn't not to miss anything.

Just then, he heard soft, quick footsteps approaching.

He looked up and saw Claudia walking toward him with something in her arms. It wasn't his old laptop.

It was a brand-new MacBook Air, but not just any regular MacBook. This one was encased in shining platinum. It looked special, expensive, and custom-made. Claudia stopped right in front of him and smiled politely, holding the laptop out in both hands.

"Boss," she said respectfully, "Isaac has transferred all the files from your damaged laptop into this one. He said everything has been fully restored and is in perfect condition."

Ryan blinked in surprise, his eyes fixed on the machine. "Wait... really?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Claudia said, nodding. "Your old one couldn't be repaired in time. Isaac thought it would be better to move everything into a stronger and faster system. This is a MacBook Air, platinum casing, fitted with Core i7 CPU, 64GB RAM, 1TB SSD, and a GTX 1080 GPU."

Ryan's lips parted slightly. He wasn't the kind of person to be blown away by flashy things, but even he couldn't deny that this machine looked powerful and expensive.

Claudia added, "Now you'll be able to access all your Nova files, accounts,

and data without a single issue."

"Thank you so much Claudia," Ryan said quietly as he took the laptop from her with care. It was cool to the touch and solid. "Really, thank you."

Claudia smiled warmly. "Of course, boss. It's my job."

Ryan placed the laptop gently on the table beside the documents and said, "I've gone through the files. I think I'm ready for tomorrow."

Claudia's expression brightened. "That's good to hear. Tomorrow's executive meeting will be very important."

Just then, Claudia's phone buzzed. She quickly picked it up, checked the screen, and her smile vanished slightly. "Boss," she said, looking up. " An email just came in... from Julian Knight."

Ryan raised an eyebrow. "Read it."

Claudia opened the email and read aloud. "He says—and I quote—' Please, kindly give me more time. I need to invest the money I borrowed so I can grow it and repay fully. I wasn't expecting this sudden recall. Please, just give me a bit more time. I'm begging you.'"

The proud Julian was already begging the 'pauper,' without even realizing it. Ryan huffed.

Ryan didn't blink. His voice was calm as ever as he gave out another command. "Reply him with one sentence. Tell him he has 5 minutes left, and Nova's lawyer would be sent to him."

Claudia gave a single nod. "Understood." She typed the reply without asking questions.

Exactly 3 minutes later, her phone beeped again. She opened it and her eyes widened slightly. "Boss," she said. "The Nova official account just received seven billion dollars."

Ryan gave a slow nod, his expression turning unreadable. "Good. It means he is left with 1 billion dollars. He wouldn't predict what would hit him next."

Claudia hesitated, then added, "What's your next plan, boss."

Ryan ignored the comment. Instead, he leaned back and said coldly, " Now send a letter to Mr. Henry. Tell him to cut down another 40% of Julian Knight's salary."

Claudia blinked, startled. "Another 40%?"

"Yes," Ryan said. "Do it."

Claudia obeyed and sent the message to Mr. Henry, the Nova Finance Head.

Moments later, her phone buzzed again. "Mr. Henry replied, sir," she said. "He's asking why the sudden pay cut. He said he needs an explanation."

Ryan stood up from the couch slowly. "Tell him it's a direct order from the CEO."

Claudia typed again and hit send.

Another reply came through almost immediately. Claudia read it out, "He says he can't just reduce anyone's salary like that. He needs official documentation and reason."

Ryan's eyes darkened. "Then send him a sack letter. Replace him

immediately and assign a new HR head. Offer Julian Knight a new salary scheme of forty thousand dollars monthly."

Claudia smiled slightly, and she didn't argue. "Yes, sir."

Ryan turned away and walked out of the sitting room, his fists clenched slightly by his sides. His face remained calm, but deep within, he was ready to make everyone pay for looking down on him.

He entered his room and sat on the edge of his bed. Feeling the need to clear his head, he picked up his phone, unlocked it, and opened F****** k to scroll through for a few minutes.

But the first post he found on his feed made his fist clench.

It was a livestream video. The thumbnail caught his eye.

It was Matthew and Jessica.

They were laughing inside a well-decorated studio, and the title of their stream read:

"Look Who We Saw on the Streets Today!"

Ryan tapped on it, and the video started playing.

Matthew's voice came first. "Guys, you won't believe who we ran into today—our old classmate, Ryan. Remember the one who used to say he'd make us regret?"

Jessica burst out laughing beside him. "He looked so rough, so dirty. I almost didn't recognize him. His jeans were stained with mud, and he had this ancient phone in his hand. I swear, I thought he was a beggar!"

Matthew joined in, "He used to boast that one day, Jessica regret

dumping him. But the only regret I had today was getting my tires dirty from that pothole!"

Jessica giggled loudly. "I even took a photo when the water splashed him. Wait... can we show it?"

Matthew clicked a button, and on the screen, Ryan saw himself frozen mid-step, his pants soaked, and his head slightly down. Laughter filled the room as both of them pointed at the image.

Ryan's jaw tightened. His eyes grew red. The video continued playing, but he couldn't hear anything else. The blood in his ears was rushing too fast.

He felt his breath catch in his throat.

All the memories came flooding back—the humiliation, the public rejection, the laughter from his classmates, the online posts mocking him.